

US NEWS

Bunker mentality: How Mark Zuckerberg, Kim Kardashian, Tom Cruise and other celebs are prepping for doomsday

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Kim Kardashian is said to have had a safe room built.

It'll be the most comfortable apocalypse ever.

Doomsday bunkers are all the rage among the rich and famous. Facebook Founder Mark Zuckerberg is reportedly developing a 5,000-square-foot underground bunker complete with a living space, a mechanical room, and an escape hatch at his \$100 million Hawaii compound. Kim Kardashian, Shaquille O'Neal and Tom Cruise are said to have built bunkers or temporary safe rooms. Bill Gates apparently has bunkers under his homes.

But in the Big Apple, where space is scarce and the city is vertical, preparing for the end of the world takes some creativity to go with all that cash.

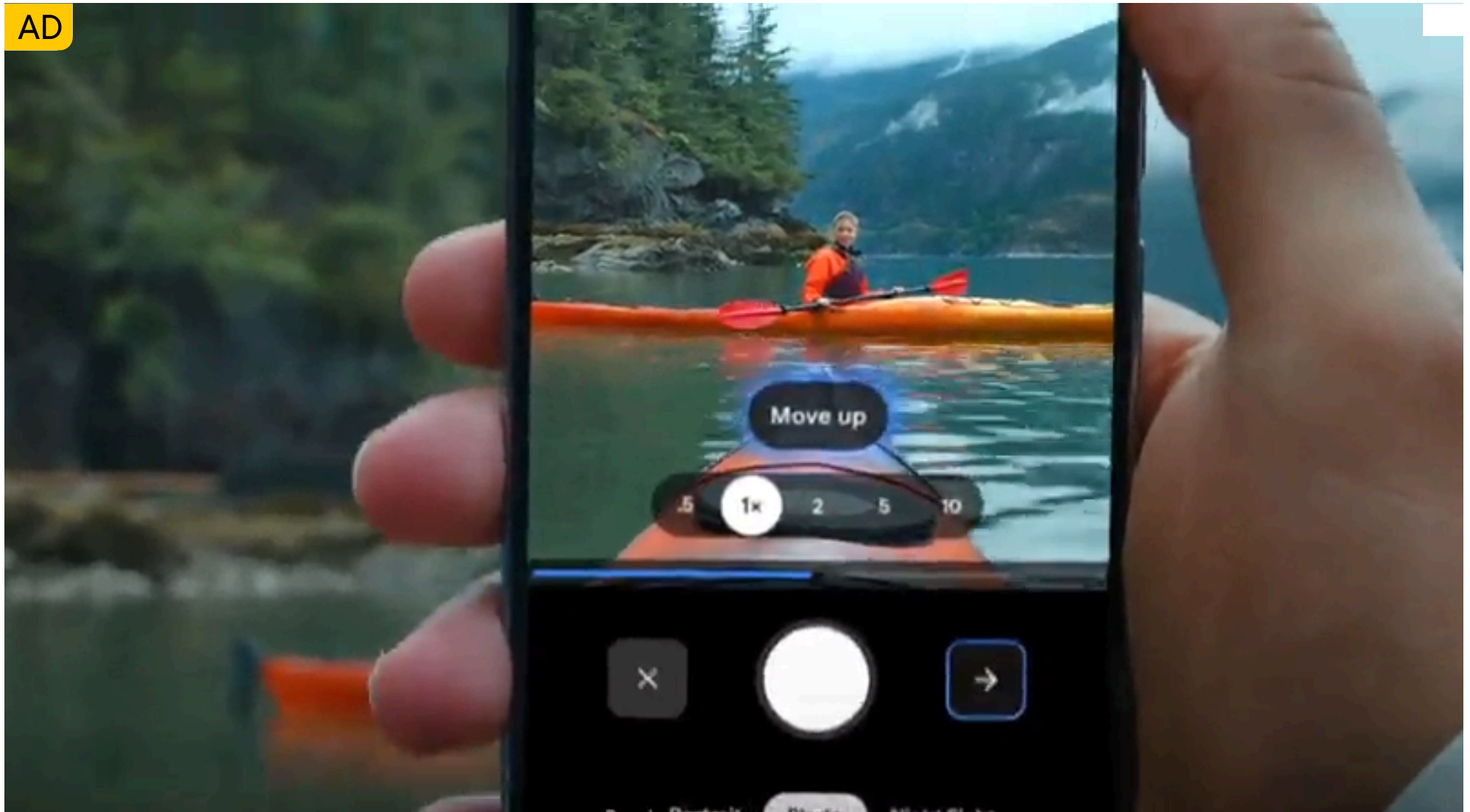


Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg is reportedly building a large underground bunker.

Jiji Press/AFP via Getty Images

“In an apartment you don’t have a lot of space to just dedicate to the safe room,” said Christopher Pollack, managing partner of high-end custom building company Pollack + Partners.

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“So, we’ll do them in the master closet where there’s enough room to store food and water and there’s a bathroom there in the closet potentially. And the family could go in there for a short period of time.”

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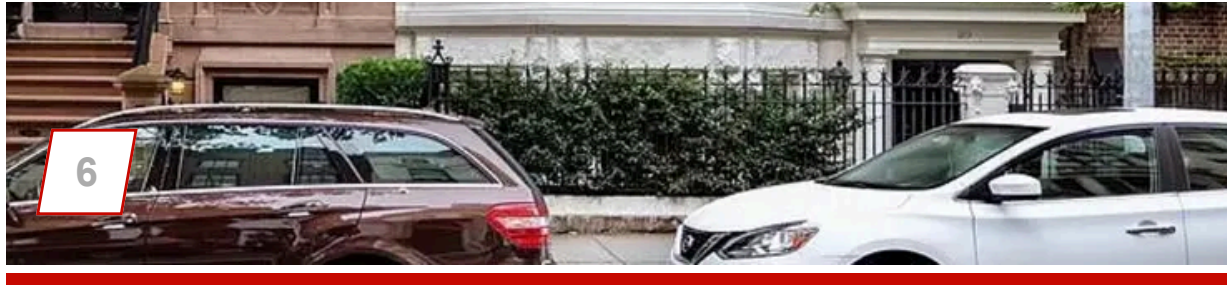


Homeowners discover suspected Nazi bunker underground with creepy message scrawled on walls: 'Beware, the enemy is listening'

In a duplex apartment on Central Park West, Pollack turned two closets and a master bathroom into a 300-square-foot haven.

“It functioned every day as a closet and a master bathroom,” he said. “But in the event of like a dirty bomb in New York City, the family could go into that. It had special ventilation and food and water storage for a number of days.”





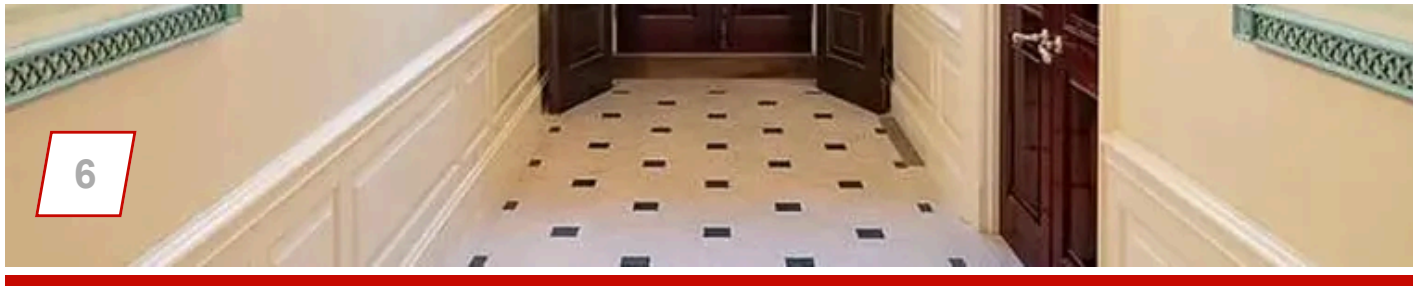
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For three Upper East Side townhouses, owned by finance executives, Pollack said he used a closet to create safe rooms.

“Those are typically good places because they don’t have windows and you can store things in there,” like water and clothes, he noted.

Bruce Ehrmann, a broker at Douglas Elliman, helped an oligarch from a former Soviet republic secure a Manhattan apartment with a swanky safe room because “there was a lot of controversy around him.” The safe room, which was furnished “like a living room,” was prominently featured in the apartment, according to the broker. It was bulletproof, had a bathroom and self-contained utilities, “even though it was on the 50th floor of a skyscraper,” Ehrmann said.





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The late Michael Price, who ran hedge fund MFP Investors, lived in an ultra-luxe six-story townhouse at 20 E. 78th St., which was armed to the hilt. He purchased the sprawling mansion, a block from Central Park, from socialite Pia Getty. The home had a vault-like panic room armed with several phone and electrical lines, food supplies and 12 television monitors to see all the other rooms.

It was further fortified by a key-card entry gate leading to the ram-proof and bulletproof front door. Plus, it had a wall with a hidden door, with a vault for shoes and bags behind it, per a 2020 luxury market report from Olshan Realty. Price sold it in July 2020 for \$18.8 million.

Actress and Goop Founder Gwyneth Paltrow, 51, reportedly added a fortified panic room to 278 West 4th St. in the West Village, which she bought in 1998. The bulletproof space inside the third-floor master bedroom of the townhouse doubled as a walk-in closet. She sold it in June 2005 for

\$6.75 million. Years later, U.S. Sen. Bob Kerrey was said to have rented the home for \$20,000 a month.

Pollack fulfilled a client request for a safe room to imbue the feeling of camping in the woods.

20 East 78th Street, Townhouse



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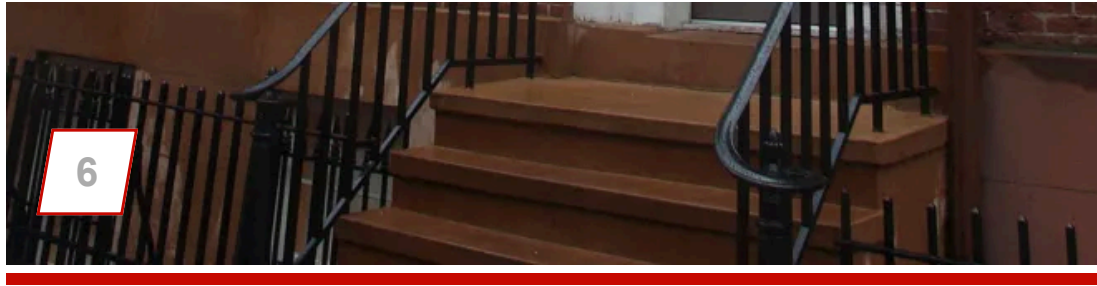
Around 29% of adult Americans spent \$11 billion on doomsday preparations in a 12-month period, according to a Finder survey.

Another client, he said, joked about having “some wine and Viagra” in their safe room.

Albert Corbi, president and founder of SAFE, which provides customized security systems, has included golf and car simulators in safe homes he has designed, as well as pyrotechnics outside — a lighter-than-water agent is spread across the surface of a lake, which can be ignited.

In New York City, Corbi said his jobs have involved creating “a hardened safe room or a hardened safe core, like a whole floor.” Gotham’s clients are most concerned with “breaking and entering, the random violence,” he said, rather than an apocalypse.





Paltrow apparently created a “safe room” in this West 4th Street home.

Helayne Seidman

An effective safe room, Corbi said, starts at around \$50,000 and can exceed \$1 million.

At the highest end, Pollack said, safe rooms could include air filtration systems; food supplies; medical kits with medicine; clean and separate dedicated water supply; Faraday cage to block electromagnetic fields; a subterranean space with thick concrete walls; secret entry door; back-up energy sources, like generators and batteries; and luxury finishes and accommodations.

For Pollack, at the most basic level, the firm’s safe rooms typically include hardened walls, doors and locks, made with materials like carbon fiber, steel and cement block; a dedicated wireless phone; a dedicated land line transmitting voice over copper lines; alarm keypad; panic button; pepper spray; and CCTV monitors.





Paltrow reportedly fortified a room in her former West 4th street home.

Getty Images for The 2024 MAKERS Conference

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People from all socio-economic levels want safe spaces, even in New York City, according to Dr. Robyn Gershon, a professor at NYU School of Global Public Health and an expert on disaster preparedness.

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It's "amazing to me because these apartments aren't big enough to hoard anything," she said.